

The Spirit

Byron Presbyterian Church

December 2021 Newsletter

Let There Be Light!

“Christmas is most truly Christmas when we celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who need it most.” (Ruth Stapleton Carter)

As we enter the season of Advent, we start the Christian year anew. Join us each week as we light another candle and prepare for the birth of the Christ child and prepare ourselves for a fresh start, renewed by faith and filled with energy for the new year ahead. The Christian Education and Worship committee has planned many special events to make your preparation and anticipation for the Christmas season a special and meaningful time.

Advent candles will be lit by four families this year:

Sunday, Nov. 28th – the Cummins family

Sunday, Dec 5th – the Geissler family

Sunday, Dec 12th – the Renfrew-Marquez family

Sunday, Dec 19th – the Beckwith family

Sunday, November 28th the first Sunday of Advent will be the “Hanging of the Greens”. Our sanctuary will be decorated for the holiday season, and we will do an official countdown to light the tree! After the service we will have a coffee hour downstairs with sweets and treats for all! Mrs. Tyler will have a quick and easy angel ornament for everyone to make and take home to hang on your tree.

On Friday, Dec. 17th, starting at 6pm, we will meet at church for Caroling in the Park(ing) Lot! Come and sing familiar Christmas carols and holiday tunes. If the weather outside is too frightful, enjoy the music from the warmth of your car. We will have hot cocoa and cookies for all and even provide “car hop” service as you listen. Does not get better than that!

Sunday, Dec 19th we will show “Christmas on the Network News”, a video Sunday School performance originally filmed in 1988. We will bring it back to the “big screen” during the Sunday service. We will be inviting many of the “stars” of the show to attend church that day. Be ready for a red-carpet event! After the showing, kids will be excused to Sunday School to attend a Birthday Party for Jesus. We hope everyone will join us!

Friday, Dec 24th – Christmas Eve Candlelight service at 5:30 pm. Bring your kids, your grandma, your uncle, your neighbors. Hear the story of the birth of Jesus, the baby in the manger. The music, the candlelight, the familiar words, will wrap you in a blanket of warmth.

Sunday, Dec 26th – the fun continues. Our pastor, Rev. Jim Renfrew will take a “long winter’s nap” and our music director and certified lay pastor, Laurence Tallman, will lead the worship service.

Come enjoy!

CE/Worship Committee: Kim Dewey, Chrystal Britt, Marilyn Britt, Pam Lynch, Mary Ann Blair, Laurence Tallman, Faline Tyler, Rev. Jim Renfrew

The Basics

- * Sunday In-Person Worship at **9:45 AM**. Sunday School begins with worship at 9:45 AM
- * Sunday Zoom-only service is at **11:15 AM**; ID# 773 728 758 Passcode 858134 Tel. 929 205 6099
- * Our building is wheelchair accessible with a lift at the side entrance.
- * Contact Rev. Jim Renfrew by call or text to 585-813-2934, or
- * Contact Administrative Secretary David Burke. _____
- * Visit our Byron Presbyterian Facebook page for information ahead of each Sunday service.
- * Visit our website www.byronfpc.org to find past sermons and other church information.
- * Weekly Office Hours are Tuesdays and Fridays, 10 AM until 1 PM.
- * The church office e-mail address is byronpresb@outlook.com

Here's Where We Are

Right in the heart of Byron, you can't miss us! Perfectly located for worship and mission!

Easily reached from surrounding towns.

Not so easily reached from beyond that, but, amazingly, people find their way here!

We have a lift if stairs are a challenge.

We have a weekly Zoom-only Sunday service at 11:15 a.m., very convenient if you are unable to leave your home or if you live in a distant place.

A happy place to enjoy community and friendship.

A safe place if the world is getting you down.

A great opportunity for children to learn and grow.

Yes, it has been a challenging year, but we keep moving ahead in faith and hope!

Health Safety Protocols

If you are vaccinated, no mask needed.

If you are not vaccinated, wear a mask please.

**Please continue to exercise caution
for your own health and for the health of others.**

Financial Information:

Offerings & Gifts: We have a secure on-line donation feature now available at the Byron Presbyterian Church, please visit our website at www.byronfpc.org and click the big "Give Now" button at the top.

Offering envelopes are always available on request.

Shannon Thompson is serving as Treasurer.

Congregational Meeting

The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation of the First Presbyterian Church of Byron will take place following worship on Sunday, January 30. This meeting will be unlike most annual meetings. Yes, we will elect new church leaders and members of the 2022 Nominating Committee, receive written reports, and review financial statements, but we also plan to have an energetic conversation about our congregational mission.

Choir Schedule

Choir Practice, Wednesdays, 7:00 PM, December 8,15,22;

Anthem Sundays on December 5,12,19, rehearse beginning at 9:00 AM,

Christmas Eve 5:30 PM (arrive 4:30 PM)

From the Pastor

Dear Friends,

The Big Bang Theory holds that the universe and everything we know and see was created billions of years ago in a single instant, where out of nothing energy exploded, matter was generated, and the universe began to expand and cool. Note that the Big Bang Theory offers no explanations for whom or what caused the Big Bang. Nor does it try to. It only describes what happened after the Big Bang.

And then there is the Creation Story in Genesis. I actually have no problem aligning the two accounts. After all, the Bible is a story of how people came to understand and trust God. It is not meant to be a scientific document. But it does present the idea that however the Universe began, the idea of people was there from the start, that in this vast Universe of planets, stars and galaxies that God had even more profound purposes. The Genesis story is more poetry than science, and its vocabulary rarely intersects with what you might hear in a lecture on the Big Bang, but the poetry is beautiful and creates in our troubled times a zone of prayer and contemplation about the mind and purposes of God.

The first chapter of John's Gospel is all about creation, too, but it adds something more. It doesn't focus on the establishment of day and night, the sun and moon, or the emergence of plants, animals and people. But it does ask, "What was God thinking?"

A potter looks at a lump of clay and imagines a beautiful vase. A man looks at a chunk of wood and imagines a carving. A woman looks at colored yarn and dreams up a beautiful prayer shawl. God looked at the spark of light and imagined a world, a people and a Savior.

Much of what we celebrate in the Christmas season is based on the events in Bethlehem, the birth of the baby, the angels singing, the shepherds visiting, the wise men travelling from afar. But John goes back to the very beginning to emphasize that the thought of Jesus, the idea of the Christ, the plan for a Savior, the need for a Messiah, was in the mind of God from the moment that the light first appeared in the darkness.

I like the opening of John's Gospel because it shows that the coming of Christ was no accident of history, but the heart of God's intention for creation from the very beginning of everything. John has a name for this, "*The Word*". "*In the beginning was the Word*". The Word is more than speech and writing. It is God in action, creating, revealing, reconciling and redeeming. Jesus Christ is the Word that became flesh, living in the world, living among us full of grace and truth, and in him we have come to see the glory of God and experience the power of God's purpose and blessing.

John's story could make you feel small and insignificant, compared to the vastness of the Universe. But consider this: if Jesus was in the mind of God from the very beginning of all things, then you were there, too. God has you in mind, not just at the present moment, but from the very beginning. God has you in mind, not just observing from afar, but as the Word in your life, actively involved on your good days and bad days, actively touching your heart and mind and soul. God has you in mind, especially if you ever feel lost, or confused, or stuck. You are in the mind of God from the beginning of the Universe. I can't prove it scientifically, but I can draw you into the poetry of it. In the beginning was the Word, and that Word is your Word, too. In the beginning is your beginning. In the birth of Jesus, the Word is for you!

Merry Christmas! **[Jim Renfrew, Pastor]**

Preaching Texts:

December 5	Luke 3:1-6	"The Word of God Came"
December 12	Luke 3:17-18	"What Should We Do?"
December 19	Luke 1:39-55	"A Time of Haste"
December 24	Luke 2:1-20	"The Geography of Christmas"
December 26		Laurence Tallman preaching

Bible Study

We are taking a Bible Study Break during December, but we will return on January 28, 7:00 PM.

Prayers

We are praying for **Tom & Melanie Nesbitt, Harold and Nan Nesbitt, Richard and Rose Wright** (Nancy Clark's parents), **Hayley & Ryan Stein's** family, **Barb Read, Janet Pike, Audrey Blount, Gene Richenberg, Ruth McCracken, Marie Andes, Carol Stamp, and Everett Dickson.**

We are sad to relate the news that **Doris Hillabush** passed away on October 31. Dorie served our church in many ways, as a deacon, as a premier maker of prayer shawls, and she filled our faith family with laughter and joy. We are praying for Dorie's seven children and their families.

Congratulations to **George Squires**, recently honored by the Oatka Creek and Black Creek Watershed Committees, for his work to improve the health of watersheds in western New York over the last twenty years. We note that George is a graduate of Cornell University who majored in Environmental Science.



Prayer Chain



If I spotted this sign while driving, I would not just drive cautiously but come to a dead stop! I'm not sure how mermaids move about while on dry land, but it would be worth seeing in order to know! Of course, a mermaid crossing is a complete fiction and someone was having fun with signage. But our own prayers sometimes border on the fictitious as well, because in the midst of life's challenges it can feel like we are seeking the miraculous and the impossible. But that doesn't stop us. What seems impossible just gives more encouragement to pray. It can't hurt and it might help! Send prayer requests to Chrystal.

December Birthdays and Anniversaries

December Birthdays

- 5 Jim Moore, Remi Liles
- 6 Danny Stevens
- 8 Wendy Hilbert, Clare Mathes
- 10 Lee Shuknecht
- 13 Rodney Walker
- 15 Richard Walker, Chris Resetarits
- 20 Christopher Hilbert
- 25 Ben Ezard
- 26 Meghan Dewey
- 30 Kim Dewey
- 31 Bill Emerson

December Anniversaries

- 9 George & Anita Hillabush
- 11 Frank & Connie Swanson
- 22 Donald & Rebekah Johnson
- 27 John & Jackie Johnson

Sewing Group

Our Sewing Group meets on the 1st Tuesday of each month at 6:30 pm. On December 7th we will make "quilt as you go" stockings. Skilled or unskilled, it's a great opportunity to learn the basics of sewing, to freshen old skills, and to make new friends. Here is a photo of the November project, a "pumpkin wreath" for Thanksgiving!



Church Leadership

Session: Clerk: Shannon Thompson, Moderator: Rev. James Renfrew
2021 Shannon Thompson, Vicky Truax, Patty Welch
2022 Jim Welch, Laura Bestehorn, Ron Glazier
2023 Ruth Andes, Chrystal Britt, Liz Weber

Deacons: Co-Moderators: Faline Tyler and Laura Platt,
Treasurer: Sara Geissler Secretary: Elizabeth Shuknecht
2021: Linda Engle, Marilyn Britt, Sue Hockey
2022: Faline (co-Moderator), Sara Geissler, Elizabeth Shuknecht
2023: Wendy Louis, Patty Iamon/Laura Platt (co-Moderator), Luan Riner

Trustees: Chair: Tom Nesbitt Secretary Robin Shuknecht
2021: Robin Shuknecht, Eric George, Mark Dewey
2022: Lee Blair, Jr, Rich Hillabush Walker, Tom Nesbitt
2023: David Keller, Marc Kenward, Kim Dewey

Mission Associate: Jordan Sloat

The Nominating Committee is seeking people to serve as Elders, Deacons and Trustees. Please speak with Luan Riner if you are interested. Session is seeking a volunteer to serve as Clerk of Session; please speak to Rev. Jim Renfrew if interested.

Trustees

It is December once again. That special month of the year that is filled with joy and excitement. So much to do and so little time. Try to set some time aside to remember the true meaning of Christmas and reflect on your memories of the past. Reach out to those who could use a call, a note or even a visit, if possible, to brighten their day.

We would like to Thank Dan Stevens for plowing the snow from our parking areas again this year. In addition, we ask for your help (if you are able) to sign up to help shovel the walkways on Sunday mornings. There is a sign-up sheet in the back of the sanctuary. We appreciate your help. I know snow is not everyone's favorite, but who can deny how beautiful it looks with a fresh covering and the snowflakes sparkling in the sun. Remember to use caution on the West side of the building near the side entrance. When the sun gets bright enough it can cause the snow from the roofs above to slide down, usually without warning.

If you can, put up a bird feeder and watch all the activity you can generate in your yard.
Buy Local and Stay Warm.

[Tom Nesbitt, Trustees]

Deacons

The North Bergen Presbyterian Church Food Pantry is open Saturday, December 18, 9:00 – Noon; Wednesdays, December 15 and 22, 6:00 – 8:00 PM. call Pastor Dave Fish at 290-5487 for more information. To help this effort, our Byron Deacons are looking for winter outerwear, personal care items, puzzles books and games, [new or used in good condition] for the North Bergen Church pantry.

Bell ringing still has some slots open Dec 4, in LeRoy Tops, see sign-up sheet in church. We are upping our filling of stockings for area youth to 50 this year. This will coincide with the pantry at North Bergen. Waiting on Dave to get the details. This would be a wonderful time for our youth to help out others. Why not have a child or grandchild help shop, who else would know just what youth might want, age appropriate.

Shout out to Pam Truax for making hats for the needy.
Any questions call Laura or Faline.

[Laura Platt, Deacons]

Sunday School “SUPERHEROS OF THE BIBLE”

We’re learning about superheroes of the Bible this year. Join Mrs. Tyler as she teaches our kids about all the wonderful and exciting people found in the Bible. Mrs. Tyler will have stories, crafts, and we bet there will be capes!!

We will need our superheroes to wear a mask during class. We want healthy, happy heroes! But never fear.... we have special superhero face masks as well, and we’ve managed to add a 2nd table to our Sunday School room to give everyone a little extra elbow room!!

Backpack Program

We have added one more family to our recipients, but still have additional space available as the school identifies additional students that may be facing food insecurity.

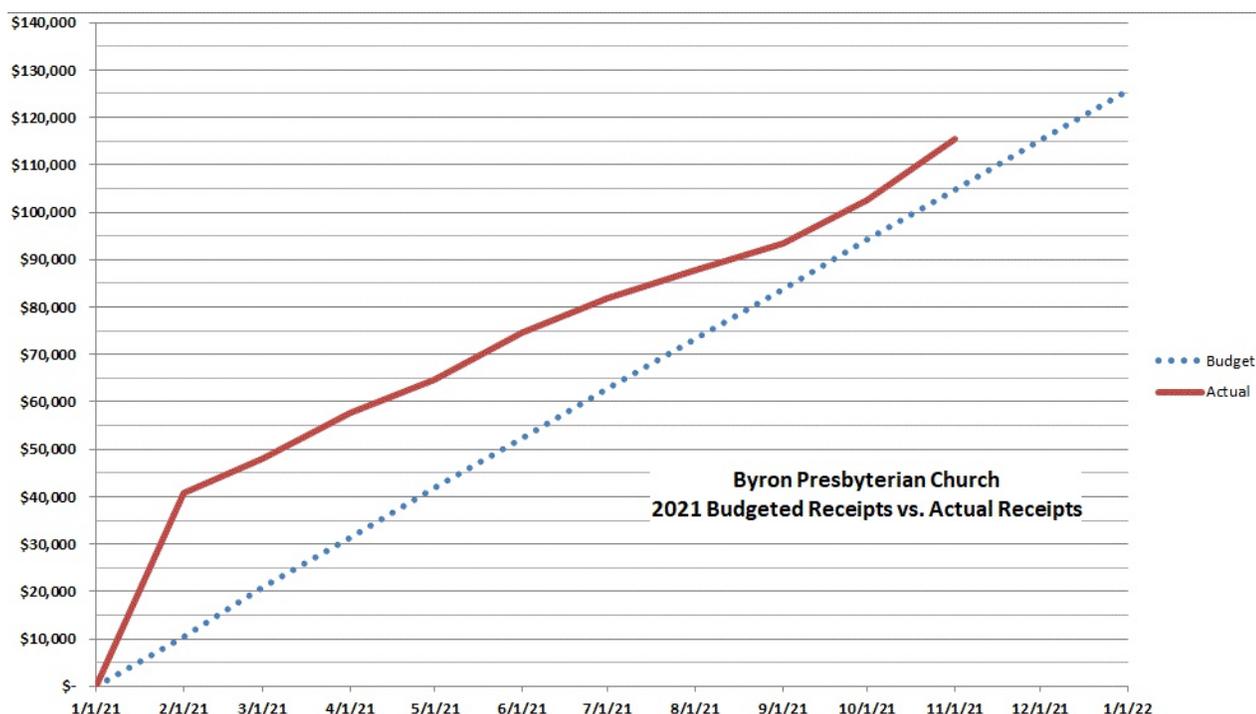
Each time Bergen Evangelical Presbyterian Church hosts their mobile food pantry, they let us know if they have a couple of appropriate items for us and we have added to our supply in this way. We certainly appreciate them thinking of us.

If you are interested in donating to the Backpack Program to help those in our own community who are struggling with the rising cost of food in an already food insecure budget, please feel free to send a donation directly to the church or drop it in the collection plate, clearly marked “Backpack Program”. We appreciate your continued support.

[Pam Kenward]

Christian Women's Christmas Party

Tuesday, December 14, Christian Women’s Christmas Party, 6:00pm in the fellowship hall at the Byron Presbyterian Church. Join us for appetizers, beverages and cookies. Please bring 3 to 4 dozen cookies for a cookie exchange. Any questions, contact Chrystal Brit or Robin Dunnington.



2021 DECEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28 9:00AM Choir 9:45 Worship 10:45 Hang Greens 11:15 Zoom Service	29	30 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours	1 5 PM T.O.P.S. 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM AA	2 12:30 PM Clergy Lunch at Chaps	3 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours	4 10 AM - 6 PM Bell-Ringing at LeRoy Tops
5 9:00 AM Choir 9:45 Worship 10:45 Deacons meet 11:15 Zoom Service	6	7 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours 6:30 PM Sewing Group 7:00 PM Stewardship	8 5 PM T.O.P.S. 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM AA	9	10 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours	11
12 9:00 AM Choir 9:45 Worship and Communion 11:15 Zoom Service	13	14 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours 6 PM Women's Christmas Party	15 5 PM T.O.P.S. 6 PM North Bergen Food Pantry 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM AA	16 6 PM Conversation concerning homeless- ness at North Bergen Presb. Ch. 7:00 PM Session	17 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours 6:00 PM Christmas Caroling	18 9:00 AM - Noon North Bergen Food Pantry
19 9:00AM Choir 9:45 Worship and Special Video Show 11:15 Zoom Service January Newsletter Deadline	20 10:00 AM VCI Pastor Cohort	21 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours	22 5 PM T.O.P.S. 6 PM North Bergen Food Pantry 7 PM Choir 7:30 PM AA	23	24 4:30 PM Choir 5:30 PM Christmas Eve	25 Merry Christmas!
26 9:45 Worship 11:15 No Zoom Today	27	28 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours	29 5 PM T.O.P.S. 7 PM No Choir 7:30 PM AA	30	31 10 AM - 1 PM Office Hours	1 Happy New Year!

Join Us During Advent!

**Sunday, November 28, Hanging of the Greens,
following 9:45 AM Worship**

**Saturday, December 4, 10:00 AM – 6:00 PM,
Bell-ringing at Salvation Army at Tops in LeRoy.**

Tuesday, December 7, 6:30 PM, Sewing Group

**Tuesday, December 14,
Christian Women's Christmas Party, 6:00 - 8:00 PM**

**Friday, December 17, 6:00 PM,
Christmas Caroling at the Church**

**Friday, December 24, 5:30 PM,
Christmas Eve Candlelight Service**

**First Presbyterian Church of Byron
6923 Main Street
Byron, NY 14422-0206**